

FOREIGN DEPARTMENT

IN CHARGE OF

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THE NURSING MOVEMENT IN GERMANY

A SHORT time ago we gave some extracts from a paper by Agnes Karll, showing the new tendency of German nurses to become independent of their training-schools and to organize among themselves as American nurses have done.

That Agnes Karll is a woman of fine and strong character and serious purpose is evident from her writings. But in an article called "Nursing Associations Contrasted with Free Nursing Unions," by Clementine von Wallmenich, the head of a notable Red Cross motherhouse in Munich, it may be seen how a nurse and woman of equally fine and lovely character and of equal earnestness views the situation from an exactly opposite standpoint.

Fräulein von Wallmenich, while a conservative by birth and training, is by nature liberal and progressive, as is shown by the innovations she has introduced into her own school. But she belongs to the aristocracy, who look with deep distrust on independence for women, and who feel absolute horror at the thought of doing work *for money*. As a sister, as a voluntary deed of kindness, one may do any kind of service, but not for money. Her article, of which space will only allow us to give an outline, is an ardent plea for and defence of the various nurse-training associations, especially that of the Red Cross, but it is evidently a plea for a lost cause, for German nurses must inevitably free themselves from the life-long bondage in which they are held by the motherhouses, and her own open-mindedness makes one feel that she may some day admit that a self-controlled independence may be compatible with true womanly and nursing ideals.

Beginning with a sketch of the development of nursing and the rise of "free" ideas, she claims that good and reliable nursing service can only be the exception outside of carefully controlled associations on account of the peculiar demands of nursing and its combination of lowly, almost menial, services with those of most delicate and difficult character—its strain upon the moral qualities of the nurse and the various dangers to which she is exposed. She mentions the nursing of men, and says, "In the truly frightful discussions which have lately taken place on the nursing of men patients in private duty it has been shown what serious abuses may exist." She discusses the temptation to extravagance of the private-duty nurse; her tendency to become indifferent and to lose her finer sensibilities; the danger that she may become overbearing and tyrannical unless carefully restrained by a guiding authority. She then says of money: "There is nothing more painful, more humiliating, than to bargain and fix prices where one should only go—with a heart full of self-sacrificing love—to serve. It need not be said what mortifying circumstances the independent nurse meets, even among the rich, and with those of small means it is unendurable to ask pay-

ment when through illness the income has shrunk. In the eyes of the public the work of the sister should be freely given."

She then mentions the anxiety of the "free" nurse in seeking work, and says, "Those who want to earn much must submit to the frightfully exacting claims of hysterical millionaires—odious tormenters—because 'they pay well.'"

She describes the difficulties of union among the "free" nurses; of maintaining central homes and registries; the dissensions and demoralization of the weaker members. She then relates how, cognizant of this disorder, the stronger members, with the support of the German National Council of Women, have lately addressed a memorial to the Minister of Education asking for State control and examinations with testimonial. This seems to her a costly and cumbersome apparatus with little result, for she asks: "How can examinations into moral qualities be carried on, and how can their continuance be certified? Each nurse would have to be under surveillance of the police, for a more fitting oversight would be impossible through its cost."

Although teachers pass a government examination, she thinks nursing quite different. (It is really not different, for teachers should have the same moral qualities as nurses, and they also find opportunities for becoming demoralized if they are not the right kind.) She thinks that in order to show testimonials of any value each nurse would have to have a book similar to those now used for servants, in which, under police supervision, all their working time is accounted for and certificates of character entered. Now it seems that the Council of Women, fully aware of all these difficulties, has made the following clause part of its petition, "that the State should admit to its examinations such training-schools only as could give a guarantee of thorough and equal education to all its nurses, and ample provision for their future," and of this request Fräulein von Wallmenich heartily approves. She believes that State supervision and regulation of training-schools for nurses is just as necessary as it is for the hospitals, and all hospitals in Germany are inspected and regulated by the State. Not only does she hold this reform to be feasible and desirable, but she has herself, in a previously written article, urged it upon the State authorities, as she admits that many training-schools are deficient in these respects.

[We will pause here one moment to point out, especially to our English critics, that this conceded point is the real and vital point that we are all contending for. If the State would demand, and secure, a certain acceptable standard of education as the minimum, we would all immediately be satisfied. It is the *education* we want protected. The moral certificates must come from our organizations.]

The many charges brought against the training-schools of unjustifiable repression of the nurses, of despotism, of overwork and penury, are discussed by her with warmth and ardor, yet too much of it all seems to be true. It seems that the strictly religious orders, the Catholic and Deaconesses', are the original sinners in the matter of overwork. She admits that nurses in German hospitals are heavily overburdened (fourteen hours' work is the custom), but says significantly, "If we, only, expected less of our nurses than has hitherto been expected, we would be unable to compete with the Deaconesses' and Catholic nursing orders." As it is, the payment received by the motherhouses for the services of nurses is not high. "We receive from private hospitals thirty-five marks (a mark equals twenty-four cents), from city hospitals thirty marks, for district nursing fifteen marks payment." (This means, probably, by the month.)

Let us pause here again to remark that since, then, it seems that, after all,

the nursing service *does* come down to a matter of dollars and cents, and as it is shown that nurses, regarded practically as slaves, are hired out to every kind of institution for fourteen to sixteen hours' hard work a day, for a meagre price of which in turn they receive only a bare pittance, it is certainly time for the nurses of Germany to revolt. She compares the religious motherhouses with an absolute monarchy, the "free" nurses with an attempted republic, and the Red Cross training-schools with a constitutional monarchy.

Her account of the new regulations which she has had introduced into the management of the Bavarian motherhouse shows that she is progressive. First, as to recreation and freedom: "The sisters remain in close relation with their own families—are not required to give up family life. They do not live communistically—if they have private means they retain and enjoy them; they can furnish their rooms individually, and, if study is not neglected and if they have proved themselves reliable, their visits, letters, and reading-matter are not supervised; they may attend concerts, theatre, exhibitions, lectures."

Further, in the future the nurses are to be represented on the Managing Board. "The 'Council of Nurses' (Schwesternrat) is composed of ten sisters, one of whom shall be the Oberin (matron). It has some influence in every detail of training-school work, discipline, dismissals, pensions. In the annual meeting it presents suggestions, opinions, and observations in an orderly way. The members of this council are elected every three years by all the sisters of the association in secret ballot conducted by the managers.

"Once a year at least the council meets the managers to discuss the affairs of the association and to receive reports from the Oberin and head sisters." Then, further, the advanced course for preparing able sisters to take charge of hospitals and motherhouses is the work of Fräulein von Wallmenich.

The training-schools of Germany demand a deposit from their pupils equal to the cost of their tuition. If the pupil leave arbitrarily before her time of service has expired, this is forfeited. This seems only fair, for in no other profession do pupils get their training free, as in nursing. The time of training is fixed at one year, after which they promise to give two years of service. This service must also benefit themselves, as a one-year training is very insufficient.

The latter part of Fräulein von Wallmenich's paper, in which she describes the whole-souled devotion with which the matron must give herself to her work and to her nurses, is the best refutation of the unfair criticisms which are often launched against training-school superintendents by unthinking nurses. The whole paper is most interesting, and throws much light upon the internal affairs of German schools of nursing.

LETTERS

It so happened that in going down through the Rhine country and Southern Germany we saw a good deal of the work of the deaconesses under various conditions. And there can be no question that, as workers, they deserve all praise, and that, as persons to meet, they are admirable and lovable. In physique and muscle they seem so sturdy and strong—many of them with the shoulders and backs of field-workers, able to do the hard work of men. Their faces, without exception, as far as I have seen, are gentle and good, serene and kind. Their manner is most amiable; they meet one with a gentle kindness, and are ready to take any amount of trouble for visitors. While a certain proportion are well-

educated, many are apparently of limited education and know little or nothing outside of their work. Of nerves they evidently have none, and of critical requirements none, and of desire for change and new experience little.

They get up at five o'clock in the morning and take turns in doing all kinds of hard work besides the regular ward work. I have seen them hanging out clothes, scrubbing floors, washing ward linen, carrying wood and water, etc.,—besides keeping wards and patients clean, carrying out orders, doing night duty and special duty,—and go to bed after fourteen hours' work with, perhaps, a church service or some singing of hymns as their only relaxation. With all this they are patient and cheerful, and do good, conscientious nursing. The beds I saw under their charge were immaculately clean, the patients' finger-nails clean and trimmed, and surgical dressings neatly made, rolled and pinned, sterilized, and solutions and appliances all well kept. No wonder that women like these, each one able to do the work of three, are looked upon with covetous eyes by hospital managers! Add to this that they are satisfied with twenty-five cents a week pocket-money. I not long ago heard, in a charities conference at home, a medical man and philanthropist advocate the training of an order of women similar to these for district nursing in our American cities. His idea was that one such woman could stay with one patient at a time, nursing the sick person, doing the housework and cooking, dressing the children and seeing that they went to school, washing and ironing, marketing, and managing the finances of the father and wage-earner. Now these German deaconesses could do that just for their living expenses. But what man would do the work of three or four people for his keep only? To be sure, the wives and mothers of poor families do it, but should it become a universal custom? I doubt if the American self-supporting woman will take to it.

One of the most attractive spots I visited in charge of the deaconesses was at Rothenburg on the Tauber, in South Germany, that beautiful old walled town. The hospital, now called the Heilige Geist Spital, is very ancient. Long ago it had been founded as a stopping-place for pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem, afterwards opened to the poor and sick of all kinds, and enclosed in the city walls in 1280. On the grounds there are a church, the hospital proper, almshouses, offices, and granaries. A beautiful bit of architecture is the "Hegenreiters' Haus," where mounted watchmen were always on guard in the old days. The fine old vaulted cook-house is now used as a laundry, and the old baking and brewing buildings are now turned into extra wards for contagious cases. The wards are small, from three to eight beds each, with fine old beamed ceilings, deep window-seats, and each window filled with flowers. The floors were painted and were spotless. Beds made up entirely with white—no bedspreads were used, but only sheets over the blankets. The living-room for the sisters is a fine old room dating from 1565, and its details of doors, ceiling, and windows are so beautiful that there is almost always an artist or two there sketching. The hospital has new plumbing, kitchen ranges, telephone, etc., of which the sisters are immensely proud. They do all the cooking and kitchen work, with help of several maids. The deaconesses in this hospital come from the Augsburg mother-house, and we found the same order in charge at the "Marta Heim" in Nürnberg, where we lodged.

This is one of the places spoken of by Miss Lampe in her article some time ago, and we found it, indeed, as charming as she said. I had not quite understood, before, just what these homes were. It seems that there are different societies here, some Protestant and some Catholic, for the protection of young

girls coming from the country districts or going from one town to another to look for service or employment of various kinds. In all the railroad stations and in the third-class railway trains one sees the placards of these societies warning young women against dangers and advising them to ask for the addresses of the homes. They all have agents at the station. The Protestant have pink signs, the Catholic yellow and blue. They all maintain large establishments in the cities and do immense good, sheltering thousands of respectable girls and finding them positions. The charge made to the girls is from fifteen to twenty cents a day. Then these places nearly all take lodgers to help out with the expenses, and for women who travel in a modest way there are no pleasanter or more homelike stopping-places to be found—quiet, orderly, spotlessly clean, and of very moderate prices. They serve breakfast in one's room; supper, if one wishes it, also—just a simple supper. Dinner they do not always furnish; one must get that outside. It is not hard to find them, even without the "pink book." They are all called "Martha Haus" or Heim, or "Marien Haus," or "Mary-Martha" house or home, or "Vereinshaus." They are found all over Germany; there are some in Switzerland and several in Paris. Many of them are managed by the deaconesses, whose faithfulness cannot be overestimated.

L. L. D.



THE following is taken from the *British Journal of Nursing*:

"Under the heading 'The Registration of Nurses,' two able letters appeared in the *British Medical Journal* of October 24 from Dr. Henry Langley Browne, president of the Birmingham and District General Practitioners' Union, West Bromwich, and Dr. Ernest W. Hey Groves, of Clifton. Dr. Browne takes exception to Mr. Sydney Holland's statement that 'when one takes the trouble to inquire into the causes of complaint against trained nurses it is comparatively seldom that ignorance of a nurse's technical duties is the source of the grievance,' and says:

"It has been constantly noted by members of the medical profession that 'ignorance of a nurse's technical duties' exists amongst many of those nurses who are sent out as fully trained, and it is for this reason that some supervision of the training-schools and some test of a nurse's capability is necessary, in the interests of the public, of the medical profession, and of the nurses themselves."

"Further Dr. Browne says:

"It is not very many years since nursing duties had to be undertaken by the medical attendant, and there is nothing which has done more to relieve the strain and worry of a doctor's life than the evolution of the trained nurse. Therefore the medical profession owes a great debt of gratitude to the nursing, and it could not be better paid than by supporting the nurses in their legitimate desire for State recognition and registration."

"Dr. Groves writes:

"It is outside London and in the rural districts that it is most common to meet the quite untrained nurse, and it is just in such out-of-the-way places where the nurse has to bear the most responsibility, as she is often at a distance from a medical man. I can speak most emphatically from my own experience of the help it would be if a State (or official) Register of Trained Nurses existed."